



William J. Rowe  
President  
GRAS Associates, LLC  
11810 Grand Park Ave  
North Bethesda, MD 20852

Re: GRAS Notice No. GRN 000968

Dear Mr. Rowe:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA, we) completed our evaluation of GRN 000968. We received the notice that you submitted on behalf of Blue California on September 15, 2020 and filed it on December 14, 2020.

The subject of the notice is rebaudioside B obtained by enzymatic treatment of steviol glycosides (SGs) purified from the leaves of *Stevia rebaudiana* (Bertoni) Bertoni (rebaudioside B) for use as a general-purpose sweetener in foods, excluding infant formula and meat and poultry products, at levels determined by current good manufacturing practices. The notice informs us of Blue California's view that these uses of rebaudioside B are GRAS through scientific procedures.

The rebaudioside B that is the subject of GRN 000968 is made from highly purified components of the leaves of the stevia plant. We note that a GRAS notice for the use of specific purified components of stevia, such as rebaudioside B, and FDA's response do not necessarily apply to the uses of other stevia products.

Our use of the terms "rebaudioside B" and "steviol glycosides" or "SGs" in this letter is not our recommendation of these terms as an appropriate common or usual name for declaring the substance in accordance with FDA's labeling requirements. Under 21 CFR 101.4, each ingredient must be declared by its common or usual name. In addition, 21 CFR 102.5 outlines general principles to use when establishing common or usual names for nonstandardized foods. Issues associated with labeling and the common or usual name of a food ingredient are under the purview of the Office of Nutrition and Food Labeling (ONFL) in the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. The Office of Food Additive Safety did not consult with ONFL regarding the appropriate common or usual name for "rebaudioside B."

Blue California provides information about the identity and composition of rebaudioside B. Rebaudioside B (CAS No. 58543-17-2), a glycoside of steviol, is identified as 13-[(2-O-

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$\beta$ -D-glucopyranosyl-3-O- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranosyl- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranosyl]oxy] ent-kaur-16-en-19-oic acid. Rebaudioside B is one of a group of known SGs, which differ from each other by the number of glycoside moieties and bonding order.

Blue California describes the production strain used in the manufacture of rebaudioside B. The process uses a non-pathogenic and non-toxicogenic strain of *Pichia pastoris* (derived from *P. pastoris* ATCC 20864) expressing a beta-glucosidase enzyme that catalyzes the conversion of rebaudioside A to rebaudioside B.

Blue California provides information about the method of manufacture of rebaudioside B and states that all reagents, solvents, and processing aids used are food grade and meet applicable regulations. The manufacturing process starts with a purified extract of the leaves of *S. rebaudiana* (Bertoni) Bertoni (stevia extract). Stevia leaves are extracted with aqueous ethanol and the extract is then subjected to an adsorption resin that retains SGs. The SGs are eluted from the resin with ethanol and then recrystallized. The SGs are collected by filtration and then spray-dried. Blue California states that the dried stevia extract contains  $\geq 95\%$  total SGs. Rebaudioside B is produced from the stevia extract using a preparation of *P. pastoris*. For this step, the *P. pastoris* strain is grown in culture medium, harvested by centrifugation, and the enzymes separated by homogenization and centrifugation. The enzyme fraction is then re-suspended in a reaction buffer and the mixture combined with the stevia extract to allow the enzyme to catalyze its relevant reaction. The resultant mixture is heated to denature the enzymes and then subjected to an adsorption resin that retains rebaudioside B. The resin is washed with buffer and the rebaudioside B is eluted with ethanol. The eluate is concentrated by evaporation and then cooled to allow rebaudioside B to crystallize and precipitate. The wet crystals are collected, washed, and dissolved in ethanol. The solution is treated with activated charcoal, and rebaudioside B is recrystallized, collected by filtration, and dried to yield the final rebaudioside B product.

Blue California provides specifications for rebaudioside B that include the content of rebaudioside B ( $\geq 95\%$ ), limits for total ash ( $\leq 1\%$ ), loss on drying ( $\leq 6\%$ ), lead ( $< 0.5$  mg/kg), arsenic ( $< 0.5$  mg/kg), mercury ( $< 0.5$  mg/kg), cadmium ( $< 0.5$  mg/kg), methanol ( $< 200$  mg/kg), ethanol ( $< 1000$  mg/kg), and limits on microorganisms. Blue California provides results from five, non-consecutive batch analyses to demonstrate that rebaudioside B can be produced in accordance with the specifications.

Blue California discusses published studies of the stability of SGs under various conditions and in food applications and the results of an unpublished study of the stability of rebaudioside B stored for six months at 40 °C and 75 % relative humidity. Blue California concludes that rebaudioside B is stable under the conditions of its intended use.

Blue California provides an estimate of dietary exposure to rebaudioside B. Blue California discusses a published study on dietary exposures to rebaudioside A (Ref. 1). Based on the methodology described in Ref. 1 and a relative sweetness intensity of 160 times that of sucrose, Blue California estimates maximum dietary exposure in adults (expressed as steviol equivalents) to be 2.22 mg/kg body weight (bw)/day (d) and in

children to be 2.44 mg/kg bw/d. Blue California states that the use of rebaudioside B in food is self-limiting due to organoleptic factors and consumer taste considerations.

Blue California summarizes published studies pertaining to the metabolic fate and safety of rebaudioside B. Based on the pharmacokinetic studies, Blue California concludes that microbes in the colon hydrolyze SGs completely to steviol and thus rebaudioside B shares a common metabolic fate. Blue California discusses previously reviewed published acute, subchronic, and chronic toxicity/carcinogenicity studies, published multi-generational reproductive and developmental toxicology studies conducted with rebaudioside A, and *in vitro* and *in vivo* mutagenicity/genotoxicity studies for the safety conclusion for rebaudioside B. Blue California includes an update of the literature regarding the safety of SGs through August 2020 and reports that no studies relevant to toxicology were found that would alter its safety conclusion.

To further support its view that rebaudioside B is GRAS for the intended use, Blue California summarizes the decisions on the safety of SGs by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the European Food Safety Authority, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, and Health Canada for use in food as sweeteners. Blue California notes that JECFA has established an acceptable daily intake (ADI) for SGs of 0-4 mg/kg bw/d (expressed as steviol equivalents). This ADI was based on a no observed adverse effect level of 970 mg/kg bw/d (383 mg/kg bw/d, as steviol equivalents) from a two-year rat study, and the application of a safety factor of 100 to account for intra- and inter-species differences.

Blue California includes the statement of a panel of individuals (Blue California's GRAS panel). Based on its review, Blue California's GRAS panel concluded that rebaudioside B is safe under the conditions of its intended use.

Based on all the available scientific information, Blue California concludes that rebaudioside B is GRAS for its intended use in foods.

### **Standards of Identity**

In the notice, Blue California states its intention to use rebaudioside B in several food categories, including foods for which standards of identity exist, located in Title 21 of the Code of Federal Regulations. We note that an ingredient that is lawfully added to food products may be used in a standardized food only if it is permitted by the applicable standard of identity.

### **Section 301(II) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act)**

Section 301(II) of the FD&C Act prohibits the introduction or delivery for introduction into interstate commerce of any food that contains a drug approved under section 505 of the FD&C Act, a biological product licensed under section 351 of the Public Health Service Act, or a drug or a biological product for which substantial clinical investigations have been instituted and their existence made public, unless one of the exemptions in section 301(II)(1)-(4) applies. In its review of Blue California's notice that rebaudioside B

is GRAS for the intended use, FDA did not consider whether section 301(l) or any of its exemptions apply to foods containing rebaudioside B. Accordingly, this response should not be construed to be a statement that foods that contain rebaudioside B, if introduced or delivered for introduction into interstate commerce, would not violate section 301(l).

## Conclusions

Based on the information that Blue California provided, as well as other information available to FDA, we have no questions at this time regarding Blue California's conclusion that rebaudioside B is GRAS under its intended conditions of use. This letter is not an affirmation that rebaudioside B is GRAS under 21 CFR 170.35. Unless noted above, our review did not address other provisions of the FD&C Act. Food ingredient manufacturers and food producers are responsible for ensuring that marketed products are safe and compliant with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In accordance with 21 CFR 170.275(b)(2), the text of this letter responding to GRN 000968 is accessible to the public at [www.fda.gov/grasnoticeinventory](http://www.fda.gov/grasnoticeinventory).

Sincerely,

Susan J.  
Carlson -S

Susan Carlson, Ph.D.  
Director

Division of Food Ingredients  
Office of Food Additive Safety  
Center for Food Safety  
and Applied Nutrition

Digitally signed by Susan J.  
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## Reference

1. Renwick, A.G. 2008. The use of a sweetener substitution method to predict dietary exposures for the intense sweetener rebaudioside A. Food and Chemical Toxicology 46:S61–S69.